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XII.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF MOUNT SINAI.

By MINER K. KELLOGG.

READ DECEMBER 20TH, 1870.

MR. PRESIDENT: I propose this evening to examine the natural features of the most noted station of the Israelites, in their journeys from Egypt to Palestine, and hope to furnish material for a clearer comprehension of a question which, for many years past, has excited much interest and discussion among biblical scholars and geographers.

This question relates to the existence of a plain in front of the *traditional Mount Sinai*, capable of containing the immense number of Israelites who witnessed the promulgation of the Commandments from the summit.

The assertion and ingenious arguments of those writers and travelers who deny the existence of such a plain, are so strong that the learned Dr. Kitto says, "They are likely to retain their hold upon the public mind for some time to come," and that "the question was raised in America, to which it properly belongs." In this connection he gives the views of Dr. Robinson on the negative side of the question, and then opposes them by a lengthy quotation from an article which I contributed to the New York "Literary World," in February, 1848, and then concludes the chapter with this remark: "Thus it seems that the question of the camping ground of the Israelites, which seemed to have been settled by the researches of Dr. Robinson and others, must now be considered as reopened for further investigations. The fact is, that a

complete and careful survey of the whole of this mountain region yet remains to be taken."

Under these circumstances of the case it is not unnatural that I should embrace the opportunity afforded by the courtesy of this Society to make an effort to solve a question raised, in some measure, by my published statements. To this end I will commence with a brief outline of the general features of the peninsula of Mount Sinai.

This portion of Arabia, so well known by the name of *Arabia Petraea*, is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean, and on the south by the two arms of the Red Sea. The southern district is remarkable for its ranges of lofty, precipitous and perfectly sterile mountains of sandstone, grünstein, porphyry and granite; the highest being granite and reaching the altitude of 8,000 feet, in the neighborhood of Mount Sinai.

The northern district is an extensive plain, barren alike of verdure and water; some parts being covered by coarse sand, and others inlaid with pieces of sharp and pointed flint, many of great size, and so firmly imbedded in a compact surface of limestone debris, and exposing their points in such a dangerous way as to preclude any comfortable repose to the weary traveler. This I state from experience, having passed over the whole expanse of this terrible desert—this *terra incognita*—on my way from Sinai to Jerusalem, a distance of 200 miles; taking, however, a more circuitous and different route, I believe, from almost every modern traveler. A few ruins of ancient cities are to be seen in this region, but their names have not yet been determined.

It was in this great lifeless waste that the Israelitish host wandered for forty long years. Certainly, nothing less than miraculous power could have sustained them in this scorching, arid and desolate wilderness, which offers at this day no sustenance of any kind to any living thing.

Sinai is one of the highest mountains in the peninsula, and is 7,035 feet above the sea, standing distinct from all others ; the separating spaces being sharply defined on the east and west by narrow, deep and precipitous ravines. On the north-east it is bounded by the plain, or wady, of *Er-Rahah*, and on the south-west by the plain of *Es-Sebâiyeh*. The mountain itself is about three miles long from north-east to south-west, and about one mile wide.

With this short geographical sketch, the way is prepared for entering upon the particular question which I desire to discuss this evening.

Conspicuous upon the list of those who deny the existence of a plain on the southern border of Sinai, and, consequently, that the southern summit of this mountain is not the true Sinai of Scripture, is Dr. Robinson, the well-known author of "Biblical Researches." This summit is known as *Gebel Musa*, or the Mountain of Moses ; of late years it has been designated the *traditional* Sinai, to distinguish it from the northern summit, which many modern authors declare to be the true Sinai, but which has always borne the name of *Horeb*.

Dr. Robinson, on page 153 of the "Biblical Researches," declares that "In the present case there is not the slightest reason for supposing that Moses had anything to do with the summit which bears his name ;" "nor is any spot to be seen around where the people could have assembled."

Nine years after the publication of my notes, which controverted this view by giving the measurement and character of an extensive plain beneath *Gebel Musa*, Dr. Robinson issued a second edition of his "Researches," and in the appendix briefly referred to my narrative, and said that my "description of the plain of Es-Sebâiyeh was accompanied by a sketch on wood, which was not only inaccurate but greatly exaggerated ;" but did not say wherein it was exaggerated. I presume his only reason was that it contained the plain of Sebâiyeh, this

being the only essential point of difference between his map and my own. The value of his criticism rests, therefore, upon the simple fact whether such a plain actually exists as I have represented it ; and on this point I shall adduce corroborative evidence from other sources before concluding this paper. Dr. Robinson, however, reiterated his former opinions and enforced them by giving "reasons for neglecting to examine more particularly the immediate base of Sinai on the southern side," one of which was "the distance from the base to the nearest point where the people could have stood." It is evident that he was unmindful of his former positive assertion that "there was no spot to be seen around where the people *could* have assembled," and it is certain that his logic was at fault in drawing conclusions from the relations or conditions of a thing, the very existence of which he had already distinctly denied.

Lord Lindsay is also on the list of those who deny the claims of the *traditional* Sinai. His lordship preceded Dr. Robinson, and published his "Letters" on Sinai in London, in 1838. In the subsequent edition of 1858, he remarks that, "the honor of the *quasi* discovery of Er-Rahah, and the first identification of it as the scene of the encampment, has been assigned to myself in 1837, and to Dr. Robinson in 1838, as successive, although independent observers." In the first edition, his lordship states that, "there can be no doubt, I think, that the Israelites encamped on the plain Er-Rahah ; it is the largest, indeed the only plain in all this district." "There is not space enough in the narrow ravines from which alone the peaks of Gebel Musa and St. Katherine are visible, or in any other plain or valley in the whole district, for the people to have encamped, with such regularity and comfort as it is evident they did."

Notwithstanding these confident opinions expressed in the first edition, Lord Lindsay was disposed to modify them in a note to the later edition of 1858, in which he

observes that "Mr. Kellogg, an American gentleman, who visited Mount Sinai in 1844, states the wady Sebâîyeh to the south of the convent, and of the little Mountain of the Cross (Neja), the same which I have described under the name of Gebel Minnegia, is even more extensive than the Er-Rahah, and more suitable for the encampment of the Israelites. Travelers would do well to explore the region south of the convent. Mr. Kellogg's theory, it will be observed, presupposes the arrival of the Israelites from the south, which is against probability."

I may here remark that this is not alone my theory, but one held by much older travelers. But, even admitting that the Israelites did arrive by a northern route, they could enter the southern plain with even greater facility than the northern, because they would arrive at its very entrance before striking off through wady Es-Sheikh, which leads into the northern plain. This view, therefore, does not *necessarily* presuppose the arrival of the Israelites from the south. Time, however, will not permit me to argue the "probability" of the theory of a southern route, and I pass on to another notable champion of Er-Rahah.

Canon Stanley, in his work on "Sinai and Palestine," says that, "amongst all the pilgrims who visited Sinai for so many centuries, hardly one noticed, and not one paid attention to Er-Rahah; and yet it is the very feature, since the time it was (we may almost say) discovered by Lord Lindsay and Dr. Robinson, must strike any thoughtful observer as the point in the whole range the most illustrative of Israelite history."

In another place it will be shown that Canon Stanley is mistaken in supposing that not one paid attention to Er-Rahah. That it is so seldom mentioned by the numerous pilgrims who have necessarily passed through it, because it was the shortest way to the convent, is conclusive evidence to my mind that it has never been con-

sidered as "the very feature most illustrative of Israelite history." Another reason supporting this view is that from time immemorial the other plain, Es-*Sebáiyeh*, has been reverenced as that of the encampment, from which plain alone was visible the very face and summit of the venerated Sinai. At least, this to me appears to be the reason, in the absence of any contradictory evidence, and because it would be inconsistent with probability to suppose that a plain possessing this *essential* advantage in addition to those of greater space and accessibility over Er-*Rahah*, should not have been the one accepted and revered by pilgrims.

Another remark of Canon Stanley deserves consideration. He says: "With two exceptions, all the old travelers that I am acquainted with, from Fraymensperg, in 1346, to Balon, in 1548, call Gebel Musu, *Horeb*, and Gebel Katherine, *Sinai*. Since that time, or the beginning of the sixteenth century, that hallowed name has reverted to Gebel Musa; reverted, I say, because, from Justinian's time (527) till the beginning of the fourteenth century, the tradition identifying it as Mount Sinai appears to be uninterrupted."

Now, this mistake of those early writers in confounding Gebel Musa with Gebel Katherine may be accounted for by the fact that these were supposed to be one and the same mountain. This fact I glean from Sir John Mandeville, who endeavored to correct the mistake as early as 1322. In speaking of St. Katherine, Sir John writes these words of caution to his Christian readers: "Although the collect of St. Katherine says that it is the place where our Lord gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, and where the blessed virgin St. Katherine was buried, we are to understand that it is the same country, or in a place bearing the same name, *for both hills are called the Mount of Sinai*; but it is a great way from one to the other, and a great deep valley lies between them." Sir John, having written the above a whole cen-

tury before the invention of printing, his instruction could have but little effect; but we notice that after this invention made it more generally known, the error was corrected, and the “name of Sinai reverted to Gebel Musa,” which held it again “uninterruptedly” until the second period of geographical confusion, which commenced in the early part of the nineteenth century—that is, about 1820; at least I cannot trace it to an earlier date.

In Conder’s “Popular Description of Arabia,” page 178, published in London about 1820, will be found these words: “In the names of Djebel Musa and Djebel Catherine, so incongruously associated, we have a pretty strong proof that the modern Arabic appellations are not to be depended on. *At the risk of upsetting the implicit faith of centuries*, and drawing down upon ourselves the anathema of the whole brotherhood of Mount Sinai, we must intimate the doubt we entertain whether the Mountain of Moses be the Mount Sinai on which the law was given to Israel. Burckhardt has given a description of another still more elevated summit, which seems, at least, to put forth rival pretensions—Mount Serbal.” From this we might infer that the writer was supported by Burckhardt in the doubt he risked so much to “intimate.” Let us then look to Burckhardt’s exact words, which are these:

“It will be recollected that no inscriptions are found either on the Mountain of Moses or on Mount St. Catherine. * * * From the circumstances, I am persuaded that Mount Serbal was at one period the chief place of pilgrimage in the peninsula, and that it was then considered as the mountain where Moses received the tables of the law, though I am equally convinced, from a perusal of the Scriptures, that the Israelites encamped in the upper Sinai, and that either *Djebel Musa* or Mount St. Catherine is the real Horeb.”

To Conder, therefore, may be attributed the honor, if such it be, of originating a geographical problem, which

has ever since perplexed the minds of Bible students, as to the actual position of Mount Sinai. Dr. Durbin is another strenuous advocate of Dr. Robinson's theory. In his "Travels," published in 1843, he says:

"After a careful scrutiny of the whole field of vision, we were fully convinced that there was no plain adjoining Gebel Musa, or even near it in this part of the Horeb group, where the Israelites could have encamped and *seen* the giving of the law under the conditions of the Pentateuch. * * I am surprised beyond measure that any affect still to consider Gebel Musa the true Sinai. * * It seems hardly possible that any sane man could visit the localities and doubt the accuracy of his (Robinson's) conclusions."

Other distinguished writers might be quoted as proving that the *traditional* Sinai meets with very able and candid opposition. Previous to Lord Lindsay's "Letters" scarcely any author expressed a doubt of the truth of the ancient tradition. It is only since what is termed the *discovery* of a plain before the northern extremity of the mountain, that a persistent attempt has been made to fix upon that extremity as the scriptural Sinai.

It will be interesting and profitable, in this connection, to investigate this claim to the discovery of Er-Rahah, or the northern plain. You may remember that Canon Stanley asserted that, "among all the pilgrims who visited Sinai for so many centuries, hardly one noticed and not one paid attention to Er-Rahah." In order to correct what I stated to be an error of this author, I will introduce a few sentences from that distinguished traveler, *Pococke*, who wrote a description of this plain *just one hundred years* before either of the authors alluded to by Canon Stanley—that is, in 1743. It will, then, be acknowledged that the discovery alluded to is not to be attributed to *any* traveler of the last 100 years, at the least.

Pococke considered Gebel Musa to be Sinai, and the

northern summit Horeb, which is agreeable to tradition ; nevertheless he believes *Er-Rahah* to be the plain of the encampment, though Sinai is invisible from every part of it. He thus describes this plain :

“To the west and south of Sinai is a narrow vale, called the vale of Jah—that is, the vale of God. The vale to the west is certainly Rephidim. * * * Here they show the rock which they say Moses struck, and the waters flowed out. * * This vale of Jah does not extend the whole length of Mount Sinai and Horeb to the north, but opens into a plain near a league over every way, which is called the vale of Melgah. This, also to the north, opens into the vale of Rahah, which is to the west of the vale of the Convent that is between Horeb and Mount Episteme (*wady Shu'eib, on my map, K.*). These two vales of Melgah and Rahah I take to be the desert of Sinai, into which the children of Israel moved before Moses was called up into the mount, and they remained here about two years. It is to be observed that the summit of Sinai, where God gave the law, is not to be seen from either of them, and from very few places ; not from any that I could observe to the north or north-west, being hid by Horeb.”

In these sentences of the old author is an exact description of the northern plain of Er-Rahah, though obscurely expressed, and it is something remarkable that Dr. Robinson should have omitted it from among the many other passages which he quoted from the same chapter in Pococke’s book. Indeed, it has not even been alluded to by any of the writers who have endeavored to change the traditional localities of this renowned spot. Dr. Robinson goes so far as to assert that “no traveler has described this plain, nor even mentioned it, except in a slight and general manner,” an assertion that called forth a bitter retort from Laborde, the eminent French author and explorer, who had not only noticed the plain, but introduced an engraving of it in his “Voyage in Arabia

Petræa," published in London in 1838, in advance of Dr. Robinson's work, and which, together with a large map of Sinai, Dr. Robinson announces that he was supplied with, and frequently refers to in the introduction to his own extensive volumes on the Peninsula of Sinai.

Before leaving the plain of Er-Rahah, which has obtained notoriety only within the last thirty years, and that the surrounding valleys of the holy mountain may receive proper elucidation, I will briefly state the result of Dr. Robinson's investigations, as being all that is required at present.

Of Er-Rahah, Dr. Robinson says :

"We measured across the plain where we stood, along the watershed, and found the breadth to be at that point 2,700 English feet or 900 yards, though in some parts it is wider. The distance to the base of Horeb, measured in like manner, was 7,000 feet or 2,333 yards. * * * We may, therefore, fairly estimate the whole plain at two geographical miles long, and ranging in breadth from one-third to two-thirds of a mile, or as equivalent to a surface of at least one square mile. This space is nearly doubled by the recess so often mentioned on the west, and by the broad and level area of wady Sheikh on the east, which issues at right angles to the plain, and is equally in view of the front and summit of modern Horeb."

The above estimate of Dr. Robinson gives but two square miles for the encampment of the Israelites, numbering nearly 3,000,000 persons, and for all their flocks and herds. These are the confined limits of the northern plain. The southern plain of Sebáiyeh will now be described from notes taken on the spot by myself in 1844, and published in the New York "Literary World," in February, 1848 :

"On the 6th day of March, 1844, my two companions set out from the convent at Mount Sinai for the purpose of ascending the Mountain of Saint Katherine. I declined going with them, partly through indisposition and partly because I thought I could spend the day more usefully

and agreeably in making some sketches in the neighborhood of the convent. After my friends' departure with the guides, I took a little Arab boy with me to carry my sketch-book and water bottle, and walked up wady Shu'eib, until I came to the little Mountain of the Cross (Neja), which almost shuts up the passage into wady Sebáiyeh, and where I had, for the first time, a view of the southern face of Mount Sinai. Here opened an extended picture of the mountain lying to the south of the Sinaite range, for I was now some 300 feet above the adjacent valleys. After much difficulty, I succeeded in climbing over immense masses of granite to the side of the Mountain of the Cross, which I ascended about 500 feet on its south-western face, in order to obtain a good view of the peak of Sinai which I was anxious to sketch. Here, close at my right, arose almost perpendicularly the Holy Mountain, its shattered pyramidal peak towering above me some 1,400 feet, of a brownish tint, presenting vertical strata of granite, which threw off the glittering rays of the morning sun. Clinging around its base was a range of sharp, upheaving crags, from one to two hundred feet in height, which formed an almost impassable barrier to the mountain itself from the valley adjoining. These crags were separated from the mountain by a deep and narrow gorge, yet they must be considered as forming the projecting base of Sinai.

“Directly in front of me was a level valley, stretching onward to the south for two or three miles, and inclosed on the east, west and south by low mountains of various altitudes, all much less, however, than that of Sinai. This valley passed behind the Mountain of the Cross, to my left, and out of view, so that I could not calculate its northern extent from where I stood. The whole scene was one of inexpressible grandeur and solemnity, and I seated myself to transfer some of its remarkable features to the pages of my portfolio.

“I remained at work until nearly sunset, when I dis-

covered people coming toward me through the dark ravine between the Mountain of Sinai and the craggy spurs which shoot up around its base. I feared they might prove to be unfriendly Arabs, but as they came nearer I discovered them to be my companions and their guides, who were returning from Mount St. Katherine. As the shades of evening were approaching, I shut up my portfolio, and, descending the hillside, joined my friends, and we returned together to the convent. After dinner they desired to see what I had done during the day, and my sketch-book was opened to them. They remarked, on seeing the drawing I had made, that as there was no plain on the southern border of the mountain, I might as well have left out the one seen in the drawing. After my assurance that I had copied what was before me, they laughed, and remarked that none but a painter's imagination could have seen the plain in question, for they had passed entirely round the mountain that day, and could assert *positively* that there was no such plain. Here was a difference of opinion certainly, and one that I did not relish much, as it might at some future time be the means of creating a doubt as to the faithfulness of my Eastern drawings. I begged them, therefore, to accompany me the next day to that side of the mountain and be convinced of what I had told them. They remarked that all authority was against me, and time was too precious to go over the same ground twice. The evening was spent in reading upon the subjects which had occupied our time during the day. Among other works were the 'Biblical Researches' of the learned Dr. Robinson, which had now become almost the only hand-book of the East, and deservedly so, on account of the extensive information upon the topography of the regions treated of; the vast amount of historical truths brought together in an instructive order; and the knowledge now first imparted concerning the different nomadic tribes inhabiting the peninsula of Sinai. On

turning to p. 176, vol. 1, of the 'Biblical Researches,' I was surprised at finding the following remark: 'Even to the present day it is a current opinion among scholars, that no open space exists among these mountains.' * * *

"The next morning, March 7th, I prevailed on one of my companions (Mr. A. B. Ackworth, of London) to accompany me to the plain in front of *Gebel Musa* (Mt. Sinai), and the following extract from my journal will give the result of our investigations: '7th March.—Spent in wady Es-Seba'iyeh, or the plain before Mount Sinai. Ascended wady Shueib from the convent to the Mountain of the Cross (*Gebel Neja*), and passed the high neck which joins it to *Gebel Deir*; descending, with great difficulty, a very precipitous gorge into wady Es-Seba'iyeh, we took our course along the base of *Gebel Deir*, until we came to a point whence the peak of Sinai was no longer visible, because of the intervening point of *Gebel Deir*; then striking across Seba'iyeh to the right, keeping Sinai in view, we stopped to contemplate the scene. Here the plain is very wide, and forms one with wady Sedout, which enters it from the south-east at a very acute angle, and in the whole of which Sinai is plainly seen. These two waddies made a width of at least the third of a mile. The hills rising from the east and south of Seba'iyeh, in front of Sinai, are of gentle ascent, upon which flocks might feed, and the people stand in full view of Sinai. For many miles, perhaps six or more, on the eastern border of this plain, are seen many small plains high up among the hills, from all of which Sinai is plainly visible. Near where we stood, a high, rocky platform of granite arose from the plain, upon which I seated myself, and took a sketch of the valley to its junction with wady Es-Skeikh on the north, where stands *Gebel Fureia*, a very conspicuous and singular mountain. At this point wady Skeikh turns from its eastern course after leaving wady Rahah, and runs north around *Gebel Fureia*, where it receives Seba'iyeh from the south,

and with it forms one level and unbroken plain for about twelve miles to the north of the place where I was seated. Turning back now to the south, we traversed the plain toward the base of Sinai. The wady grew narrower as we approached Neja, the base of which projected far into the plain, and its head shut off the view of Sinai for a distance of about one-half the width of the plain at its base. As we passed its foot Sinai again appeared, and we measured the plain near the pathway which leads up toward Sinai on the southern border of Neja, and which appears to be the only entrance to the Holy Mountain.

“The measured width here was 430 feet. Passing on 345 paces, we arrived at the narrowest part of the plain, some few yards narrower than where we had measured it. This may be considered as an entrance door to the plain which lies directly in front of Sinai, and which now spreads out level, clean and broad, going on gently ascending ground to the south, with varied widths for about three miles, where it passes between two sloping hills and enters another wady which descends beyond, and from which it is most probable, Sinai may yet be clearly seen.

“On the east, this plain of Seba'iyeh is bounded by mountains having long, sloping bases, and covered by wild thyme and other herbs, affording good tenting ground immediately fronting Sinai, which forms, as it were, a grand pyramidal pulpit to the magnificent amphitheater below. The width of the plain immediately in front of Sinai is about 1,600 feet, but further south the width is much increased, so that, on an average, the plain may be considered as being nearly one-third of a mile wide, and its length, in view of Mount Sinai, between five and six miles. The good tenting ground on the mountain sides, mentioned above, would give much more space for the multitude on the great occasion for which they were assembled. This estimate does not include that part of the plain to the north, and wady Es-Skeikh,

from which the peak of Sinai is not visible, for this space would contain three or four times the number of people which Seba'iyeh would hold.

“‘From wady Es-Seba’iyeh, we crossed over the granite spurs, in order to pass around the southern border of Sinai into wady Lejah. These spurs are of sufficient size to have separate names among the Arabs.

“‘Around them were generally deep and ragged gorges and ravines or water-courses, the sides of which were formed of ledges of granite, nearly perpendicular, of a pink color and fine texture. There are no gravel hills, as mentioned by Dr. Robinson, but a series of low granite hills, much broken up and of different colors, principally of a greenish gray and brown. The plain is covered with a fine *débris* of granite.

“‘Whilst crossing these low hills, my friend pointed out the path between them and Sinai, in the ravine through which he had passed yesterday, on his return from St. Katherine, and it was seen that no plain would be visible from any part of it, owing to the height of the spurs which separated the ravine from Seba’iyeh, and we concluded that most travelers had been led into false views concerning this part of the mountain, from having taken the same path, and hence it was that no account had been given respecting the plain of Seba’iyeh. This ravine around Sinai becomes a deep and impassable gorge, with perpendicular walls, as it enters wady Lejah, passing through the high neck connecting Sinai with the mountain on the south. Descending into Lejah, under the rocky precipice of Sinai, we found the wady narrow, and choked up with huge blocks of granite, which had tumbled from the sides of the adjacent mountains. We could now see the olive grove of the deserted convent of El-Arbain, situated in the bottom of the narrow valley. Passing through this garden, we found a fine running stream of crystal water, of which we partook freely, for our thirst was great. The garden was walled, and

well irrigated by many small canals, but nothing seemed to flourish but the olive. Continuing down the valley, amidst loose rocks of granite, upon some of which were inscriptions in Sinaite, Greek and Arabic characters, and enjoying the wildness of the scene, and the gloomy grandeur of the lofty mountains of naked rocks which almost overhung our path, we saw Horeb on our right, and soon entered upon the plain before it, called wady Rahah. After taking a sketch of Horeb, as the sun was setting, we made our way to the convent, to pass the night within its hospitable walls. Thus was completed a walk around the whole Mountain of Sinai.'

"I have drawn out a kind of map from my notes, by which you will be better able to comprehend the foregoing extract. Although inaccurate, it may answer our purpose."

The foregoing account of the plain Seba'iyeh, I believe, was, at the time it was published, the most minute and yet the fullest description which had been given of its extent, its shape and its physical character, and its relative position to Gebel Musa. And the views presented this evening, enlarged from my original drawings, are the only illustrations I have yet seen of the Mountain of Sinai and the Seba'iyeh plain beneath it. I make no claim to discovery, however, for this would be preposterous, since it was noticed by Dr. Shaw in 1722, and Burckhardt in 1816; though at the time of my exploration I knew nothing of their writings—a state of ignorance quite excusable in an artist, since neither Lord Lindsay, Dr. Robinson, nor any other modern traveler or author, has ever alluded to them. Those earlier authors just named agree entirely, so far as their notices extend, with my own observations. And however imperfect or exaggerated the map may be which accompanied my published notes, it is still accepted as useful and authentic. An exact copy of it, though without acknowledgment, may be seen in the Rev. Lyman Coleman's "Text Book of Biblical Geography." The author, however, has written

to me to say that in future editions of that work the oversight shall be corrected. In his communication he adds the following remarks :

“In my private judgment I fully accepted your theory. I was at Sinai in 1857, and spent three days in a study of this question, walking over all these plains and timing my walks by my watch, in company with a highly intelligent gentleman. I dissent entirely from Dr. Robinson, and only differ from your views by supposing the ‘whole mount’ to have been occupied by the tokens of the Divine presence.”

I have already alluded to Laborde as having anticipated, by many years, the so-called discoveries of Lord Lindsay and later travelers, in regard to Er-Rahah, and in fixing upon it as the plain of the encampment. It is but justice to this great writer to state that he subsequently changed his opinion and became the first of all to support the claims of the plain of Seba’iyeh against cotemporary authors with whose views he had formerly agreed. In the appendix to a work entitled “Commentaries upon Exodus and Numbers,” issued in Paris in 1841, Laborde says that he delayed its publication in order to notice Robinson and Smith’s “Sinai and Palestine,” and some other works which had just then appeared. In speaking of Sinai and Seba’iyeh, his corrected opinions are thus expressed :

“The people encamped and united in the southern plain. * * * I believe it to be impossible to find, in archæological researches which propose to fix the localities of the battles of antiquity or the events of our history, so complete a union of coincidences. And we will add, that the world does not produce a scene so grand as Sinai, viewed from the bottom of wady Seba’iyeh; a mountain of such altitude, cut thus to a point in a way to afford a view of its summit at so short a distance.”

About the time I was preparing my notes in New York for publication, there appeared in Berlin a work by F. A.

Strauss, entitled "Sinai and Golgotha," 1847. The author gives a very graphic account of his examination of Seba'iyeh. Being totally ignorant of each other's views, it is astonishing how nearly we approximated both as to measurements and topography, and to the general character of the scene. He did not go around Gebel Musa, but confined his investigations to the plain, commencing at the base of the mountain and going north to wady Sheikh, which he says "forms one vast valley with Seba'iyeh, the merging of the two being so little marked that in the darkness which had fallen we did not detect it. * * * Saba'iyeh ought to be represented as of the same breadth which Dr. Robinson assigns in his map to Es-Sheikh." He considers rightly the Er-Rahah plain "only an arm" of this vast valley. His conclusion is "that, in respect to magnitude and general grandeur of effect which result from height, there is no comparison between Sinai with its plain on the south side, and Horeb with its plain on the north."

Other writers have, within a few years, given similar testimony in favor of Seba'iyeh and the Sinai of tradition, but I consider it unnecessary to quote them here, and I will detain you only a short time longer by some very pertinent passages from very capable and distinguished authors relating to this subject.

Carl Ritter, the illustrious German geographer, says: "It is to be hoped that other observers will soon thoroughly inspect the whole topography of Sinai, that we may have a more exact map of the locality, which is the more to be desired, inasmuch as both Laborde's and Robinson's are defective in relation to the wady Seba'iyeh, and Robinson's in relation to the *plain* of Seba'iyeh as well. * * The explorations of later travelers have cleared up the whole difficulty, and have shown that not alone on the *north* side of Horeb lies a plain large enough for the encampment of so mighty a host as Israel, but that on the *south* side of the mountain there is one no less large, into which the broad and spacious wady Seba'iyeh leads

from the wady El Sheikh ; and that before this vast plain the mighty pyramid of Sinai towers just as visibly as the Ras Sussafeh in sight of the plain Er-Rahah, for which no tradition declares its testimony.” The author here speaks of the wady as distinct from the plain of Seba’iyeh, when in reality they are one and the same extended valley.

Dr. Kitto, in his “Daily Bible Readings,” a work several years later than the “Scripture Lands,” again inserts the substance of my narrative, with these observations upon it :

“ It would appear that those who in older times looked upon Gebel Musa as the Mount of God, were by no means so blind to circumstances and probabilities as travelers in their own imperfect information have imagined ; and now that it has been shown that the want of a camping ground, which alone created the desire to give a different locality to Sinai, does not exist, there appears no good reason why the despised mountain should not have its ancient and crowning glory restored to it. It is probable that no stronger instance has occurred to show the necessity of the utmost caution, and the most assured data, in disturbing the established conclusions in matters of this nature, and which may have been founded on circumstances existing, though hidden from us. * * Mr. Kellogg accounts for the mistake of previous travelers by showing that, by the *path usually* taken, this important valley of Seba’iyeh is shut out from view by the spurs in front of Mount Sinai.”

Here end the evidences which I proposed to offer in support of the *Sinai of tradition*. It is not a tradition originating with monks, as some writers have prejudiced the question by asserting, for it had existence before any religious orders were established, as we know from Josephus’ description of the mountain. Indeed, its origin goes far beyond our knowledge. It is sacred alike to the Hebrew, the Christian and the Mohammedan. But

we may soon look for an authentic report from a corps of scientific men who are, I believe, now engaged in a thorough survey of the disputed district, at the instance of a society in London ; a report which, I trust, will forever put to rest this vexed question.

Before concluding this paper, I desire to say a few words upon the religious prejudice which, I think, has had much to do in originating this whole dispute.

The desire to harmonize the acknowledged facts of physical nature with the literal sense of the Scriptures is ardent with most Christian philosophers ; but the progress of science is continually presenting formidable arguments in opposition to their labors and their hopes. This apparent conflict of science with revelation has been of great advantage to infidels and skeptics in their warfare against the Divine Word ; a warfare which will probably continue to trouble the Christian church so long as it has no fixed interpretations of the prophecies of the Old and the parables of the New Testament. The traveller, however, should if possible be free from the prejudices engendered by this conflict, in his explorations of scenes he intends to describe. His only safe rule would seem to be to receive the Mosaic record of the great Hebrew deliverance from Egypt as a stupendous miracle ; not to be understood at all by confounding it with the known laws of physical science, or with natural facts ; for this would only result in ensnaring the judgment in a network of confusion and doubt. The explorer thus enthralled can make little progress either in historic, scientific or religious investigation.

Beyond the general landmarks, such as Egypt, the Red Sea, the Wilderness, Sinai and Palestine (to which a spiritual signification is attributed by all religious denominations), there is much recorded in the memorable march of the Israelites that cannot, it seems to me, be reconciled to the law governing the human senses, nor with those of time and space. To uphold the letter of

the text strictly would be to put in doubt the entire story of Moses regarding the Israelites. May it not be that the numbering of the tribes and other incidents of the Mosaic record involved another and more important sense than the literal, just as the chronology of the earlier books of the great lawgiver are now admitted to do. If so, it would relieve the question of many difficulties.

These reflections were forced upon me in all my wanderings throughout the Wilderness and the Holy Land ; and they were strengthened by a conversation with the learned Dr. Keith, at Jerusalem, in 1844, on the occasion of a general meeting of missionaries to the Holy Land.

Dr. Keith zealously upheld the opinion that prophecies concerning the destruction of Solomon's temple had been fulfilled to the letter. But when it was suggested in reply, that there still remained *many* stones in that structure which had not been overthrown, he admitted the fact, yet still sustained his opinion by remarking that "*enough* had been overthrown to fulfill the spirit of the prophecy."

Now, it is this very *necessity* of a compromise between the spirit and the letter which opens the way to skepticism and prevents a careful and successful examination of the supposed localities of events related in Scripture. To my mind, no compromise is necessary ; the spirit and the letter are one, and when their unity is unseen, it is because we do not comprehend the nature of their union. This, however, is not the occasion for discussing this point, though it is of interest and importance ; its introduction here is solely to indicate what I believe to be the cause of the difficulty, which oftentimes leads the minds of explorers and scholars into labyrinths of mystery, and disappoints their hopes of important discoveries in sacred fields.

The results of abandoning ancient tradition without just cause must, from what has already been shown, so confuse the Bible student that he cannot be instructed by a

vivid conception of the localities of those marvelous transactions which attended the promulgation of the Commandments. It is, moreover, a censurable thing to overthrow, without good and pressing reasons, a tradition venerated for many centuries, not alone by Christians and Hebrews and Mohammedans, but also by the poor wandering Bedouin children of the desert, whose simple and abiding faith in a heavenly Father is not derived from any written creed, but implanted by the oral teachings of the patriarchs of their race, and renewed from day to day by those memorable traditions that point out those very places in their own silent wilderness which the Almighty had chosen for the glorious manifestations of His Divine goodness and power.